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**Mobile Borders/Bordering Mobilities: Status Functions, Contemporary State  
Bordering Practices and Implications for Resistance and Intervention**

**Not for Citation**

**Anthony Cooper and Chris Perkins**

The border has traditionally been understood as a single, staffed physical frontier, where travellers show paper-based identity documents to pass through. This twentieth century concept can be subject to abuse with controls often geared to fairly crude risk indicators such as nationality [...] This philosophy will not deal with the step change in mobility that globalisation has brought to our country. We believe a new doctrine is demanded, where controls begin offshore and where we use information, intelligence and identity systems to allow scrutiny at key checkpoints on the journey to and from the UK

(UK Government Home Office 2007)

**Introduction**

Observing the recent securitisation of state borders – something of a ‘re-bordering’ in Andreas’ (2003) broad terms – has complemented and advanced our understanding of contemporary state bordering practices. As nicely outlined in the introduction to this edited volume, there has been a critical, theoretical and methodological shift away from observing singular borders (seen as fixed geopolitical lines) to approaches that consider *bordering* as a complex array of overlapping socio-political spatial processes. Where the former rendered borders stationary, peripheral and at best secondary to the seemingly more important business of what went on within or across the state, indicative of a ‘container model of society’ (see Beck, Bonss, Lau 2003), the latter approach places borders more centrally and integrally to the daily lives of ‘ordinary’ people and sees them as prime sites where continual state construction, re-construction and transformation can be studied (see Anderson, O’Dowd and Wilson 2002). An important outcome of this empirical and methodological shift from borders to bordering has been the key acknowledgement that borders are diffuse and infused throughout society and very much part of political life (Vaughan-Williams 2009). As Balibar (2002) puts it, borders are heterogeneous and ubiquitous. This has important consequences when considering what a border is, where it is located and what it should (or should not) do.

State borders perform traditional geopolitical displays of sovereign power – commonly perceived to perform this sovereignty at territorial limits and edges – but they also regulate people and things in more subtle, and not so visible, ways. Described in terms of ‘asymmetrical membranes’ (Hedetoft 2003), ‘firewalls’ (Walters 2006) and codable ‘machines’ (van Houtum 2010) state borders form an integral aspect of the global

mobility management business, unevenly, disproportionately and paradoxically channelling inward and outward flows of information, goods and particularly people. These borders are no longer at the border (Balibar 2002), they function at airports, maritime ports and train stations, but they are also seen to be networked across university campuses, travel agents, and Internet websites where ‘suspicious’ behaviour can be observed and databases can be monitored and mined for information (see Amoore and de Goede 2008; Lyon 2012). They have been described as functioning along major transport routes (Walters 2006) and supermarkets and rural farms (see Rumford 2008a), often enacted and maintained by non-state actors on behalf of the state in a relationship that has been characterized as operating by ‘remote control’ (Guiraudon and Lahav 2000). Perhaps the most significant aspect that encapsulates the idea that borders are everywhere, at least within the securitisation literature broadly put, is the emergence of the ‘biopolitical’ (see Walters 2004), ‘generalised’ (see Vaughan-Williams 2008, 2009), ‘biometric’ (see Amoore 2006), and ‘smart’ (see Amoore, Marmura and Salter 2008) border in which the human body itself is rendered a prime location of border control becoming, to paraphrase Amoore (2006: 338), ‘the portable border par excellence’.

In this chapter we focus on the mobility, ubiquity and heterogeneity of contemporary state securitised borders – part of what Vaughan-Williams (2009: 1) has termed the concept of the border of the state – by examining how certain borders actively require ‘movement’ for them to function as borders and thus be acknowledged and recognised as such (see, for example, Cooper and Rumford 2011; Vaughan-Williams 2009). Traditional geopolitical borders have generally been perceived as peripheral, static and visibly exuding an air of permanence, by definition not requiring mobility to be borders. Yet, as a case in point, the UK’s ‘juxtaposed’ border at the Eurostar terminal in Paris, while visible and seemingly fixed and permanent, needs actual movement ‘across it’ to fulfil its function. That is, if the border were no longer needed to filter mobile bodies in that specific location it would simply be disbanded and a ‘new’ border presumably set up elsewhere, wherever it is seen to be required. At the same time, processes of remote control and the accompanying shift from geopolitics to surveillance-orientated and internalised biopolitics have rendered other so-called borders completely mobile, diffused and networked to the point that they are no longer instantly recognisable or commonly perceived as borders, albeit in their traditional guise (see Rumford 2008b). In short we think these mobile and mobility dependent borders require greater inspection.

Building upon our previous work in which we developed a framework for a ‘thin theory’ of borders utilising John Searl’s notion of ‘status functions’ and Friedrich Kratochwil’s writings on normative rule structures in particular (see Cooper and Perkins 2012), we want to investigate how security orientated mobility dependent borders can theoretically fit into a wider schematic of what a border logically is, what it should do, and, in the context of this chapter, how it may be challenged and resisted. This in part stems from a need to understand how these less visible mobility dependent borders are deemed necessary and therefore legitimate and accepted to many (particularly by the borderers), even though they may be unrecognisable as borders to those being bordered or to those who would take comfort from the bordering. In order to do this we want to advance our

idea that borders are the product of the imposition of status-functions on people and things to create institutional facts, which in turn is further embedded within a background web of normative claims, teleologies and assumptions (Cooper and Perkins 2012). On this logic, the word 'border' is seen as a place holder for a number of overlapping processes and bordering is very much a practical activity where an array of actors (of which the state is only one) can draw upon different sources of legitimacy – drawing upon different rule structures or the same rule structures differently – in order to frame, produce and resist borders. To this end, we argue that the mobile (mobility dependent) border observed and discussed in this chapter requires a fragile assemblage of actors, rules and objects – both intentional and unintentional to it – in order to extend and exert itself, yet crucially, it is this fragility that makes possible a space for resistance and intervention.

The chapter will progress in the following way. First, we observe and discuss the 'how, where and why' of state border securitisation before specifically discussing mobility dependent borders briefly introduced above. Second, we succinctly outline our 'thin theory' of borders by discussing in more detail the idea of status functions in relation to bordering. As already alluded, this section builds upon our previous work in which we have discussed a bare bones mechanism for understanding bordering that is not limited to ridged definitions of territorial edges. In doing so we make the case for extending the discussion to the securitisation of state borders and in particular how to better understand the supposed legitimacy of, as well as resistances to, mobility dependent borders. In the third and final section we essentially combine both discussions – in the sense of introducing the theory of the previous section to the general debate on current border securitisation – by looking at a current, and contentious, UK bordering practice whereby, at the time of writing, the UK government is advocating the use of poster vans informing illegal immigrants to go home or face particular consequences. This practice is also taking place along side security spot-checks on potential illegal immigrants – considered by many to be singled out through racial profiling although denied by the UK government – at certain places along the UK transport network.

### **The 'how, where and why' of contemporary state border securitisation**

Contemporary state border securitisation has been, and indeed continues to be, well documented across the social science literature, particularly post 9-11 and the emergence of the so-called 'war on terror'. As touched upon in our introduction, much of the research has indicated that increased border securitisation is less about closing the territorial door – in terms of higher fences, bigger signs and more watchtowers and border guards and so on – and more about (nation) states managing, categorising and thus controlling those 'variously powerful networks and flows criss-crossing their porous borders' (Urry 2000: 1). Rather than a borderless world, therefore, the 'criss-crossing' power and efficiency of mobilities and flows is, more often than not, the direct result of specific border functions and not because of their absence (Cooper and Rumford 2011: 262). At the heart of the matter is the need to simultaneously keep borders open for

business but closed to those deemed undesirable and untrustworthy (see Nevins 2002), as acknowledged by the UK government:

The aim of border control is to sort traffic into legitimate and non-legitimate and maximise the effort directed against movements that would, without action by the state, be detrimental to the UK, while minimising the burden on those that would not (Cabinet Office, 2007).

This dynamic has brought about some novel observations and theorisations that not only highlight contemporary state bordering practices in general terms but, in doing so, also advances debates on sovereignty, citizenship and the nature of state transformations. What follows is a brief overview of some relevant literatures and debates in order to embed our argument more clearly.

Much has been made of the blurring of traditional territorial logics and the rupture of territorially bordered compartments of comfort and familiarity upon which other social/cultural boundaries are fixed (Bigo 2001: 96). While many of these discussions go beyond the aims and scope of this chapter (but see Walker 1993; Campbell 1996; Albert *et al* 2001 and Vaughan-Williams 2009, amongst many others), this blurring is evidenced in the way borders have become ‘asymmetrical membranes’ (Hedetoft 2003), a metaphor amongst many used to capture the ways in which borders unevenly and disproportionately categorise and channel inward and outward flows of people and things. These borders are not limited to the limits in the sense that they have been observed to function most effectively within, across and outside of the state, a dynamic captured by Balibar’s (2004: 1) oft quoted insight that borders are ‘dispersed a little everywhere, wherever the movement of information, people, and things is happening and is controlled’. Precisely where these borders are likely to be required has been well documented too. Conforming to Balibar’s logic, the control of movement has been observed and studied in airports as well as international railway stations often located in capital cities, providing simple examples of border control residing well away from the supposed conventional territorial limits of the ‘state’ borderer. The UK, for example, has ‘juxtaposed’ borders in place at the Eurostar terminals in Paris and Brussels, as well as the ferry terminal in Calais, a general move particularly favoured by the UK government who have been quick to point out the benefits in the context of unwanted immigration:

Juxtaposed controls in France and Belgium have contributed to a 70 percent reduction in unfounded asylum claims since 2002. The juxtaposed process is an excellent example of what we can achieve when we work with our European partners (UK Government Home Office 2007)

Apart from simply emphasising the usefulness of juxtaposed borders, a key insight into government thinking is the way border function is framed in the context of (illegal) immigration and associated ‘unfounded asylum claims’. This ‘wanted/unwanted’, ‘founded/unfounded’ framing has arguably further fuelled the increased diffusion, mobility and changing topography of state border controls.

To this end, in relation to the dispersed nature and mobility regulation function of securitised state borders, Peter Andreas (2003) has argued that many western borders are becoming less hardened and militarised while at the same time becoming securitised in more subtle ways. Suggesting that more intensive law enforcement and de-militarization has accompanied the economic liberalisation of borders – or neo-liberal bordering – Andreas (2003) has emphasised a fundamental reconfiguration of the border in the sense that they are becoming prime sites of stringent law enforcement. For Andreas (2003: 107) such reconfiguration involves:

[C]reating new and more restrictive laws; constructing a more expansive policing and surveillance apparatus that increasingly reaches beyond physical borderlines; promoting greater cross-border police cooperation and use of neighbours as buffer zones; deploying more sophisticated detection technologies and information systems; redefining law enforcement concerns as security concerns; and converting war-fighting agencies, technologies, and strategies to carry out crime fighting missions

Andreas' insight captures the emphasis on external cooperation strategies espoused by the UK government in the aforementioned Home Office quote. Likewise, such reconfiguration tacitly brings to the fore the increased need for information capture, storage and exchange deemed important for state borderers interested in tracking and regulating mobility (see also Amoore, Marmura and Salter 2007). Emphasis is also placed on the mobility of the border itself – or the increased reach of state securitisation/surveillance apparatuses well beyond traditional state limits – as Andreas (2003: 78) points to a shift from internal law enforcement concerns to overlapping internal and external security concerns. Capturing state concern over the regulation of mobilities and the fundamental requirement to categorise, Andreas (2003: 78) discusses what he calls 'clandestine transnational actors' (CTAs). Such actors, it is argued, are deemed and categorised by the state to be non-stable and have the ability to cross borders with relative ease, they violate state laws as well as attempting to evade them permanently, and they conform to market demand and high profits. They include the 'usual suspects': the traffickers, the terrorists bent on causing maximum destruction to meet ideological ends, and somewhat disturbingly, unauthorised migrants simply seeking refugee status or more commonly access to labour markets. To this end, the latter group, who merely want to work, have been categorised as threatening and factored into motivations of securitization carried out at the border.

Similarly, albeit from a slightly different vantage point, Didier Bigo (2001) has also observed this particular aspect of border reconfiguration, arguing that the traditional roles of the police (conventionally active within a territory) and the military (conventionally responsible for protecting the territory itself) have become more uncertain when viewed in relation to (im)migration and, invariably, the border. Framed within a context of the evolution of '(in)security' and fear, Bigo's (2001: 96) concern relates to what he sees as the 'limits of our political imagination' in the face of a contemporary blurring of the 'frontiers between inside and outside'. For the sake of this chapter this 'limit' can be taken to mean the Weberian geopolitical imagination that relies on the objectivity and

fixity of defined and recognisable borders. As a corrective, Bigo employs the spatial metaphor of the 'Möbius Strip' – a one-sided geometric surface where what is inside and what is outside become indistinct – which is put forward as a 'new topology of security' (2001: 96) rejecting 'an objective border between inside and outside, friend and foe, law and exception (the liberal view of the border of a cylinder)' (Bigo 2007: 16). Operating within this new topology, emphasis is placed on the subjective and explicitly intersubjective nature of the ambiguous border between inside and outside in which, according to (Bigo 2007: 16), 'zones of indetermination appear' and 'zones of conflagration (of violence and of meanings) emerge'. These zones, theoretically framed within a critical reading of Foucault and Agamben in particular, become spaces of normalised exclusion – banned places in what Bigo has termed the 'banopticon' – populated by individuals 'excluded from both inside and outside, from both friendship and enmity, from both law and exception' (Bigo 2007: 17; see also Vaughan-Williams 2008, 2009). Not too dissimilar from Andreas' CTA's, these individuals are deemed unwelcome, undesirable and threatening, collectively considered and categorised as bogus asylum seekers, illegals and terrorists, embedded within stereotypical notions of race, poverty and inequality (Bigo 2007: 31).

Bigo's 'zones of indetermination' – the banopticon – is epitomised by, and very much the work of, the biometric border. And with it, the all-reaching state border apparatus becomes a fundamental space where our identity is performed and observed. Mark Salter (2007), for example, points out that the border submits everyone to the gaze of sovereign examination, not simply non-citizens or those deemed illegal, whereby we must all confess and perform our identities accordingly. Yet particularly for specific groups, profiling and subsequent categorisation has always already occurred, risk already determined, blame already attributed and events and actions already anticipated through the continual production and imposition of generalised and normalised uncontested master narratives (see Bigo 2002; see also Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking 2013). As Louise Amoore (2006: 338) alludes: 'in effect, the biometric border is the portable border par excellence, carried by mobile bodies at the very same time as it is deployed to divide bodies at international boundaries, airports, railway stations, on subways or city streets, in the office or the neighbourhood'. The association between biopolitical technologies of control and state securitisation practices drives the mobility of borders in relation to those who are 'crossing' them and opens up questions of where the state border is located as well as what the border should do. It also highlights the ways in which certain borders require mobility to be borders. Categorisation and control of mobilities (and associated sovereign performances) take place visibly at traditional points of entry – usually international transport hubs – but it has also been observed to be, less visibly, taking place elsewhere. The UK state borders functioning at the Eurostar terminals in Paris and Brussels requires frequent movement across them to be borders as the very nature of these juxtaposed borders is to filter mobilities wherever it is deemed to be required.

Surveillance orientated biometric bordering is even more dispersed to the point of complete diffusion because these state bordering processes lack a distinct location and/or crossing point and as such are unrecognisable as borders or simply unseen. These borders fundamentally need the very mobilities they function to filter, categorise and control, that

is, without mobility, either by the borders themselves or by people and goods across them, they stop being borders. The concept of 'remote control' (see Guiraudon and Lahav 2000) provides a nice example of dispersed biometric bordering as well as another example of mobile mobility dependent borders in general terms. Here, the job of state bordering is delegated to other (non-state) agencies and individuals operating on behalf of the state, summed up thus:

Along with civil servants (immigration officers, border patrols, liaison officers and consulate personnel), a wide range of 'sheriff's deputies' (Torpey, 1998) that include sending and transit countries, carriers, security agencies, travel agents and hotel personnel, employers, local social services, hosts and sponsors are all urged to reach deep into societies to uncover undocumented foreigners, deter asylum-seekers and prevent the exit of the 'huddled masses' (Guiraudon 2003: 191)

Highlighting the way in which the principle of 'remote control' has been utilised as an effective securitisation process, as well as the way in which such a process has transformed our understanding of where the border is and what it does, William Walters (2006) has discussed the example of European transport routes. According to Walters (2006: 194), the UK government identified cross-border road haulage as a backdoor where those seeking entry to the UK could do so with relative ease. Consequently, the UK authorities vigorously enforce 'carrier liability laws', forcing private transport companies, under the threat of large fines, to effectively bring in often sophisticated measures to police migrants (hidden bodies). For Walters (2006: 195), keeping with within the context of pan-European road haulage, this opens up the possibility that 'the entire road transportation system becomes a kind of networked border. The border transforms into a mobile, non-contiguous zone materializing at the very surface of the truck and every place it stops'. At the same time remote control places emphasis upon the categorisation and profiling aspect of bordering to determine who is invited, who is denied, and, perhaps more importantly, who is excluded. This in turn opens up parallel questions concerning who (or whom) is doing the categorisation and for what reasons.

We want to understand how these mobility dependent borders can be logically considered an integral part of state bordering in ways that go beyond simple definitions asserting that state borders are required wherever movement needs to be controlled. We argue that such an understanding needs to take into account the way in which words such as 'illegal', 'immigrant', 'undesirable', 'home' and so on, become integrally connected to mainstream border narratives, as well as the way in which such discourse is normalised in terms of the general public or citizenry. To this end, from a different perspective, Chris Rumford (2008b: 639) has also pondered this question when focusing on the visibility of borders. He argues that the low visibility of certain borders – what we have referred to as mobility dependent borders – perceives them to be different, untrustworthy and ineffectual, and not border-like at all, prompting the construction of traditional, fixed and more visible forms of border. What Rumford (2008b: 642) calls 'spaces of wonder' become domesticated and familiarised, the more government opt for less visible border options, the more it feels the need to instigate traditional, more familiar and increasingly visible borders in equally familiar places. The visible border becomes an act of display by the



state aimed at the public audience (de Lint, 2008), which is needed to rectify the problem of the states supposed increasingly visible lack of sovereignty, while at the same time the real and effective business of state bordering – mobility management – is less visible. In the next section we succinctly introduce our idea of bordering as the imposition of status functions in order to better explain why less visible, completely dispersed and mobility dependent borders outlined thus far are made legitimate on the one hand, but can also be resisted, contested and de-legitimised on the other.

### **Borders and status functions**

The concept of status functions is a necessary aspect (outcome) of John Searl's wider discussion on the construction of social reality. For Searl (1995) objective 'brute' facts exist in the world independently of human representation but are nevertheless required for the formation of social reality. He argues that material objects only have a function that is imposed upon them which, in turn, is not intrinsic to the object (Searl 1995: 14). In other words, things like money, passports, citizenship and national identity and so on, only have status and meaning because of what he calls collective intentionality, that is, they are given representation through general agreement and recognised as such by enough people to become reality. Thus, on such a logic, the institution of the border becomes a place in which functions are imposed upon it as well as the people and things crossing it to create status, but in doing so, further status functions are imposed to create institutional facts and realities that situate the border, as well as people and things experiencing it, into wider networks of legitimacy and meaning (Cooper and Perkins 2012: 61). It is in this way that the 'border as categoriser' can selectively regulate by acting as a vector for the imposition of status functions on people, placing them within wider chains of institutionalised meaning.

This is the case for the institutional fact 'terrorist suspect' that, at the border via illocutionary speech acts by the border guards and security agents and so on, can be imposed onto a person who is deemed to fit certain criteria. Examples of this occurrence are numerous. In 2004 Yusuf Islam, for example, a British singer formally known as Cat Stevens who converted Islam in 1977, was famously denied access to US only finding out his name was on a watch list when being detained by US officials in the process of sending him back to the UK. In another example, Ms Ghuman, a music scholar, was detained as a potential terrorist by US authorities, and later banned from re-entering, because everything about her was deemed suspicious from music cassettes to the fact she spoke the Welsh language (Bernstein 2007). Nick-Vaughan Williams (2009: 118) has also written about the shooting of Jean Charles De Menezes by anti-terrorist officers in the wake of the 7/7 London bombings in 2005 for supposedly acting suspiciously and refusing to obey police instructions. This list could go on, but in relation to the examples given, all three were innocent having no links whatsoever to terror organisations, yet regardless of this had status functions imposed on them and were entered into a sense making regime that becomes active whenever they enter a space within which that regime is valid. It shows how, in all three examples, the people were made sense of in a certain way because of the imposition of status functions and the creation of institutional facts,

while at the same time nothing about them had changed (see Cooper and Perkins 2012: 62). Indeed, in each case the individuals concerned were found to be acting normally or contrary to their newly found status at the border: Yusuf Islam is involved in extensive charity work and peace campaigns, Ms. Ghuman was found to be innocent after the US authorities admitted a mistake but was still not allowed to return to her previous status, and Jean Charles De Menezes, accused of being connected to the London bombings, was posthumously cleared of any wrongdoing with the London Metropolitan police admitting its terrible ‘mistake’. Indeed, Vaughan-Williams (2009: 118) makes an interesting and important point regarding the accepted narrative of the freak mistake by the mainstream press and general public alike:

[A]n uncritical acceptance of the discourse of the ‘mistake’ reifies rather than questions the very *framework* within which the killing of Menezes has been valorised. In other words, by merely accepting the discourse of the ‘mistake’ as a starting point in reflecting on Menezes’s death, we run the risk of colluding *with* rather than offering a critique *of* the activities of sovereign power.

In the quote above, Vaughan-Williams raises questions about the legitimacy of the imposition of status functions in terms of the origins of the legitimacy and the conditions under which they are formed. To this end, using the work of Friedrich Kratochwil, we can begin to understand how the legitimacy of bordering process – put forward here as the imposition of status functions – ‘stems from the reasonable accountability of actions given a background of pre-reflexive understandings of the world’ (Cooper and Perkins 2012: 62). On this logic, the legitimacy of any bordering relies upon bordering practices – and practices at the border – being socially reasonable. For Searl (1995: 144), similar to Bourdieu’s (1990) ‘habitus’, the background is a set of dispositions formed via social interactions overtime, which is influenced by institutional rule structures (see also Cooper and Perkins 2012). Different border institutions, therefore, have several language born representations that over time have come to form part of our pre-reflective background assumption about what a border is, what it ‘looks’ like and what it should do (Cooper and Perkins 2012: 63). This allows people to make sense of what goes on at the border: We pre-reflexively show our passports – and even confess our identities in Salters (2007) terms – because that is simply what we are supposed to do. As Kinnvall and Nesbit-Larking (2013: 347) argue, borders have ‘ontological dimensions’. This dynamic alludes to what Kratochwil (1989: 32) calls ‘neustic’ force, which, in the context of our discussion on bordering, refers to giving assent to practices and discourses that subsequently fade into the background becoming common sense aspects of socio-political life. It is a form of fixity that becomes fixed through social attitudes towards it.

In general, therefore, Searl’s discussion on status functions and the construction of social reality, and Kratochwil’s discussion on background assumptions, allows us to argue that bordering is a practical activity involving an array of different actors – for example the state, other non-state groups as well as ordinary people – in order to make sense of and ‘act’ in the world (Cooper and Perkins 2012). In turn we can say that the word border is the place holder for a number of processes, that these processes involve the creation of

institutional facts which in turn are created by speech acts, that these acts are rule governed and contextual, and that the legitimacy of speech acts and the status imposed to create institutional facts rely on a web of background assumptions to provide truth conditions (Cooper and Perkins 2012: 57). In order to understand (and indeed study) any border, therefore, requires an understanding of the rule structures within which the border is embedded. In other words, if a border is coded to categorise mobile bodies as 'terrorists' or 'illegal' and so on, the meaning of these terms can only be understood and constituted – and the border subsequently understood and constituted as legitimate – by understanding the further consequences in the rule structure sequence they are embedded. Crucially, however, different rule structures, regimes and ways of thinking overlap, and consequently different ways of thinking about, acting about and discussing any given border or bordering process can all have authority – have neustic force – and the interplay between these sources of authority provide a space for intervention and resistance. Collectively, people may uncritically accept and make legitimate who is to be 'excluded' through a process of collective intentionality – determine the optimal degree of border permeability (van Houtum 2002) – but at the same time the perception of strong borders may be lacking for a proportion of the collective or alternatively other sections may reject certain bordering practices altogether, enforcing their own border narrative. With this in mind, in the final section of the chapter, we want to discuss some examples of current UK bordering policy – current in terms of being discussed in the UK media at the time of writing – in order to illustrate this interplay between sources of authority and sense making regimes. This will be framed in relation to our previous discussion on mobile, mobility dependent, state securitised bordering practices.

### **'In the UK Illegally?' Three examples of current UK bordering practice and subsequent resistances to such practice**

Three recent UK government anti-illegal immigration schemes offer an illustrative example of how the logic of mobile, diffuse borders plays out, and the implications mobile bordering has for intervention and resistance. The first features a border that is quite literally mobile. In July 2013 the UK government launched a campaign across six London boroughs to encourage illegal immigrants to leave the country voluntarily. The campaign made use of vans displaying large adverts reading: 'In the UK illegally? Go home or face arrest' followed by number to text and receive 'free advice, and help with travel documents'. The vans also displayed the number of illegal immigrant related arrests in the past week. In the background was the figure of a Home Office official, dressed in a black uniform and holding a pair of handcuffs. The second example saw immigration officials with UK Border Agency labels on their uniforms conducting spot checks at targeted railway stations across the country (BBC 2013). The third was the use of social networking site Twitter to broadcast examples of successful immigration arrests, including pixelated photographs of suspects arrested across the UK (Batty 2013). Taken together, these three constitute highly visible examples of the UK's mobile borders in action.

However, this government initiative has been met by a strong backlash that demonstrates the double-edged nature of mobile bordering. As we have argued traditional bordering relies on the presence of the state maintained border, which by virtue of repetitive practice through time has become sedimented as a taken for granted, commonsense aspect of being in a world of nation states (Cooper & Perkins 2012). The traditional state border, in other words, is an institution that has taken on the appearance of objectivity (Perkins & Rumford 2013), becomes one of the many background assumptions about how everyday life works, and is acted towards as such. Furthermore, the scale of traditional bordering practices mean that only the territorial state, with its resources and monopoly on the legitimate use of violence, is able to maintain them. This does not preclude intervention into the traditional border, as for example the work of Amoore and Hall (2010; 2013) has demonstrated. However, the introduction of diffused mobile borders within the polity itself has the effect of producing multiple, smaller sites for contestation of the border while simultaneously lowering the barriers for engagement in border politics. Intervention is no longer against the monolith at the edge of the polity, but at multiple sites proximate to everyday experience.

This can be seen in the responses to the three initiatives introduced above. The vans have produced a mobile site and template that brings the border debate away from the territorial fringes. Intervention has ranged from parody to legal challenge. Pukkah Punjabi, for example, called the number on the van to request help traveling between Willesden and Harrow: the resultant messages posted on the social networking site Twitter detailing his conversation with immigration officials reached hundreds of thousands of people (Punjabi 2013). In another example, human rights charity Liberty has commissioned their own vans, with the message, ‘Stirring up tension and division in the UK illegally? Home office, think again’ displayed with in a similar font and colour scheme to the original (Walker 2013). In terms of legal challenges, the method of van billboards have been referred to the advertising standards agency (APSA), both for the potentially offensive use of the term “Go Home” and the statistical claim that 106 arrests were made in “your area” last week. The spot-checks and the broadcasts of immigration arrests have produced a similar wave of parody and legal dispute. The spot-checks have raised questions about the criteria used to single out those to be approached, with government officials insisting that people are stopped based upon intelligence and behaviour rather than racial profiling, while others have argued that officers ‘appeared to be stopping and questioning every non-white person, many of whom were clearly ordinary Kensal Green residents going to work’ (Withnall 2013). The train stations became sites of contestation of the border when 30 members of the Southall Black Sisters, a group established in 1979 by Asian women, began protesting against UKBA officials (Quine 2013). With regards to the Twitter broadcasts, activists and lawyers have pointed to the potential illegality of referring to those arrested as immigration offenders before this has been proven. Both initiatives have been lampooned in the media, and in particular on Twitter, where government action has been likened to the dystopian novel ‘The Hunger Games’ (Dixon 2013), and compared to the Stasi.

This case illustrates three aspects, or three paradoxes, of the UK’s mobile borders that have broader implications for mobile bordering itself. The first we term the paradox of

visibility. The networking of diffuse, mobile borders means that they do not have the same performative power as the traditional state border; indeed as we have discussed these borders may be invisible to the vast majority. But in order for the state to perform its territorial integrity, that its borders are *working*, it has to make its mobile bordering processes visible and thus bring novel bordering practices under the spotlight. As discussed above, traditional bordering practices at the edge of the territorial state have, by virtue of the passage of time, become part of the background assumptions of actors regarding how mobility works. Importantly, this means that the state does not have to justify the border at the edge of the state, it is taken for granted. However, novel bordering practices such as the billboard vans, or the spot-checks at train stations do not have the same taken-for-granted quality; they pull people up short by interrupting everyday expectations of how borders function, are worthy of remark and therefore likely to be discussed. This leads to the second aspect: the paradox of diffusion. Diffused, mobile borders may be effective in the micro-regulation of flows of people and things, but they also produce multiple sites, and multiple forms of contest and negotiation that can potentially go beyond the state's monopoly on the exercise of power. The "Go Home" vans illustrate how these two points work in tandem. They were an attempt to perform the mobile border, and thus firm up the state's claim to territorial integrity, but the act has also produced a highly visible site for Liberty's counter message as well as intervention into bordering practices via legislation designed to regulate not bordering but advertising. In the terms of the analytical framework set out above these novel bordering practices are not reasonably accountable within the context of pre-reflexive understandings of how borders operate within our social worlds.

The third aspect relates to the ubiquity of bordering as an everyday practice, which we term the paradox of proximity. As these three examples demonstrate, novel mobile bordering strategies rely not only on the act of sorting the 'wanted' from the 'unwanted' but also the active justification for the sorting practice itself. This justification must appeal to pre-reflexive understandings of just treatment of particular categories of people. As Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking (2013: 346) argue,

The fact that borders are politically constructed means they have to find their legitimacy in boundaries, i.e. the cultural and political narratives about a society, its culture, territory and history; about who is a member of that society and, consequently, who is an outsider.

Of course, as long as the practice of sorting remains invisible there is no need for justification and, to a lesser extent, so too as long as the sorting occurs at the edges of the territory. However, due to the paradox of visibility, mobile borders require accompanying messages in order to justify the act of bordering. The proximity of mobile borders, brought about by the paradox of diffusion, has the potential to make them a part of everyday debate and problematise the narratives that they are embedded in. The "Go Home" message is a particularly good example of this. The Immigration Minister Mark Harper has argued that the message is 'merely telling them [illegal immigrants] to comply with the law' and that 'by no stretch of the rational imagination can it be described as "racist"' (Sankey 2013). However, this polysemic symbol has quickly been reframed and

placed within a different narrative: the context of racist National Front graffiti of the 1970s, and this re-narrativisation has been broadcast to hundreds of thousands of people (Punjabi 2013). This tactic has been very effective in de-legitimising the vans and has effectively ended this particular bordering practice. The parody is also significant as it points to other forms resistance to bordering can take. Once the Home Office released images of immigration related arrests on Twitter, those images were instantly remediated, the messages subverted and the arrests de-legitimised. Again the form in which the original bordering practice took place became the site of resistance, as the Home Office's own 'immigrationoffenders' hashtag was used to hijack the message and put forth the arguments of those against the policy. This problem of contextualisation, or management of the narrative in which the border policy was embedded, was made all the more difficult when the story was picked up by the mainstream media.

Finally, this case is an example of what Perkins and Rumford (2013: 273) have referred to as 'point of indeterminacy', whereby the apparent fixity of an institutional arrangement, in this case the UK border, 'becomes unfixed'. Overnight the UK border became an object of scrutiny, the subject of critique among the general public who now felt the border impinging on them. The proximity of the border, now visibly active at local train stations and broadcast across the Internet, produced sites of contest where groups such as the Southall Black Sisters have challenged border policy. In effect the barriers to popular engagement with borders has been lowered, and a space for participation in border politics produced by the logic of mobile borders and its internal contradictions.

### **Some concluding remarks**

In this chapter we have focused upon what we formulate to be mobile, mobility dependent, borders – juxtaposed borders as well as diffused and networked biometric and smart borders – deemed increasingly necessary and legitimate by the state to defend its interests. We have sought to discuss in detail how and why these borders are made legitimate by some and contested by others without recourse to simple empirical descriptions which assert that state bordering is simply required wherever the control of movement and associated information is required. This discussion has been informed by Rumford's (2008b) insight into the visibility of borders, whereby certain borders are becoming less visible to a large proportion of people on the one hand, while at the same time, as a direct consequence, other more traditional borders are gaining extra visibility. At the same time we wanted to understand how these 'less visible' state security bordering practices could be made visible and subsequently offer some insights into how they could be, and are being, challenged and resisted.

Building upon our previous work we essentially argued that mobile, mobility dependent, borders are made legitimate through the imposition of status functions on people and things falling within the 'border space', which can only be understood by looking at the wider background assumptions within which the bordering takes place. Indeed, the institution of the border itself is also the product of the imposition of status functions and

its subsequent background normative position. Putting forward this definition of bordering processes, however, also means that the border can be discussed differently, on our own terms, in which we are able to take into account other, equally legitimate, understandings of what a border should and, importantly, should not do. The ability for resistance, in other words, is paradoxically a fundamental part of border imposition in the sense that the border creates its own possibility for challenge and resistance. By presenting this train of argument, we hope to make visible the ways in which different actors can draw upon their own sources of legitimacy – or embedded sources of legitimacy differently – in order to produce and frame their own borders and in doing so create the possibility to resist and render problematic the imposition status functions upon themselves.

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